

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE TRANSITION TO A NEW LEADERSHIP POSITION  
IN SERBIAN ARMED FORCES ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

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by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE TRANSITION TO A NEW LEADERSHIP POSITION IN SERBIAN ARMED FORCES ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS**, by Major Miljan D. Svetozarevic, Serbian Armed Forces, 89 pages.

Although leadership is deeply grounded in the Serbian culture, it is not well represented in the doctrinal documents, or in the military education curriculum. This study examined what factors influence the transition into the leadership position of the staff group/section in the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) organizational units, through the comparison of the selected literature and the qualitative survey of officers in the SAF and select students at the US Army Command and General Staff College. The study identified effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF staff section, the most influential factors on the SAF staff groups'/sections' performance, SAF staff group/section leaders' challenges during the transition, the most influential factors on time available for transition, and leaders' priorities during transition. The study showed a close match between participants' answers and the selected literature with some differences as a consequence of the participants' experience, and national and organizational culture. The study also warned that some challenges were understandably not recognized by the participants, but should also be taken into consideration because they would help the SAF leaders to successfully complete the transition. Finally, the study recommended building adequate leadership concepts into the doctrinal documents and military education curriculum of the SAF.

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## ACRONYMS

CGSC	Command and General Staff College
GLOBE	the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
SAF	Serbian Armed Forces

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Organizations are part of our everyday life. They are everywhere and most people either work in one or use services from one. However, some organizations are successful and some are not. Though many factors can influence the level of success, the role of a leader in an organization makes a significant difference. Leaders are in every level of organization. In the military, on lower levels, leaders are leading sections, platoons, and companies. At this level, usually referred to as the direct level, tactics, techniques and procedures are usually clear and communicated plainly. Leaders train their men, and lead them in a follow me manner.

However, what works at the lower levels may not work at the higher military levels. Becoming a field grade officer and moving from a direct to an organizational leadership role is a turning point in an officer's career that requires a different set of skills. These leaders face new challenges that emphasize their ability to organize work and allocate tasks without exercising in-depth control over subordinates, often in zero-margin for error conditions. Unexpected circumstances may require field grade officers to assume command under the additional pressure of ongoing assignments, which makes transition to the new leadership position even more challenging.

Every military organization is divided into subordinate elements—departments, staffs, units. Each one of these elements may be further subdivided in teams and each team has a leader. Although it looks like military organizations, their leaders, and their inherent teams are almost identical in nature, each functions in its own way, based on the

cultural environment. The Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) is no exception. The Republic of Serbia, as a member of international organizations such as the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Partnership for Peace organizations provides an excellent example. The Republic of Serbia is also working toward a European Union membership, and is indirectly connected to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization through the cooperation within the security sector reform activities, and multilateral exercises. All these organizations have, among others, a goal to preserve worldwide peace. One of the three missions of the Serbian Armed Forces is to participate in peacebuilding and peacekeeping in the world within multinational initiatives. This mission is to be realized through international military cooperation and participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. This implies the need for close cooperation and interoperability with allied military forces, beyond the areas of organization, equipment, and standard procedures. It requires a similar way of thinking and mutual understanding, within the military organization, at least during joint engagement.

In the Serbian Armed Forces, leadership has always been strongly valued. Throughout Serbian history, especially its military history, there are numerous examples of great leaders and exalted, inspiring leadership. However, although leadership is deeply grounded into the Serbian culture, as such it is usually taken for granted. Although leadership is required and valued, there is not much emphasis on leadership education in the military officer's education curriculum. The SAF education system provides five levels of education for officers. The first level is the Military Academy, the second level is the Basic Command Staff Course (equivalent to Captain Career Course), the third level is the Command Staff School (equivalent to the U.S. Army Command and General Staff

College (CGSC)), the fourth level is the General Staff School (equivalent to the War College), and the fifth level is the High Security Study. Leadership, as a study field, is only part of the General Staff School's curriculum.

As a part of one's interoperability skill set, understanding, learning, and wisely applying scientific approaches to leadership will be significant as the SAF continues to increase the military leadership skills necessary for the future role in preserving peace in the region and worldwide. Inherent in this skill set that leaders must not overlook is the cultural dimension of teambuilding activities. In this regard, the true challenge will be how to apply leadership knowledge to a Serbian military educational and educational environment. To be truly successful in a teambuilding environment, leaders must consider cultural differences, as well as different missions, structure, and the composition of the SAF general staff.

### Leadership

Leadership is usually defined in accordance with the personal perspective and aspect of the phenomenon that is of most interest to the researcher.<sup>1</sup> Definitions of leadership may include organizing, directing, and guiding others, or may be as simple as the leader is someone whom people follow.<sup>2</sup> As Peter G. Northouse suggests in

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2006), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Kruse, "What is Leadership?" *Forbes*, 9 April 2013, accessed 2 April 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinkruse/2013/04/09/what-is-leadership/>.

*Leadership: Theory and Practice*, most of the 21st century leadership definitions include four elements: process, influence, groups, and common goals.<sup>3</sup>

The US) Army defines leadership as “a process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”<sup>4</sup> The US Army definition adds a new dimension to its leadership definition, to improve the organization that is not typically found in other leadership definitions.

According to the US Army’s definition, military leaders must both lead and improve the team. Since the leader is part of the team, defining team is an important aspect in defining the leadership role. One answer is that “a team is a group of people who are interdependent . . . and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal.”<sup>5</sup> This implies forming an organized group of people in a specific manner is important. Essentially it is about the task—mission, the people—team members, and the relationships among team members.<sup>6</sup> The task is determined by the nature of work that the group is doing. Based on the assigned task, team members need to be suited to do the work.<sup>7</sup> Once the team members are there, they will socialize with each other. Group

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<sup>3</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2013), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 10 September 2012), para. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Leigh L. Thompson, *Making the Team: A Guide for Managers* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 61, fig. 4-1.

socialization is essential if its members are to coordinate their efforts and work together as a team.<sup>8</sup> In military organizations, forming a team implies a leader's role. A key requirement for effective teams is trust, and trust will enable relationship, commitment, and effective communication among parties.<sup>9</sup> Leaders have to rely on their subordinates as much as subordinates rely on leaders.

When an officer assumes command of a staff section, there is an initial period of time during which the officer has to adapt to a new working environment (unit missions, superiors, colleagues, subordinates, need to upgrade proficiency level, etc.). This is also a period of time that forms the foundation of his future command and leadership effectiveness. It is important to have a good start for both the team and its leader, and the organization as a whole, which means that during this initial period of time, the performance level of the section under his command must at minimum remain stable. This puts a field grade officer in a situation in which he has to make numerous decisions about his approach and actions regarding how he will lead this team. He must deal with at least two challenging areas—how to respond to professional demands (day-to-day business), and how to form an effective and efficient team that will support him in the future.

To address the importance of a new leader's role in building teams on the SAF General Staff, this study will provide qualitative research of the factors that influence the newly appointed leader of a Serbian Armed Forces general staff section in forming an

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<sup>8</sup> Thompson, 74.

<sup>9</sup> Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, para. 10.

effective and efficient team during the initial transition, and maintaining an expected level of performance. The following questions will guide the research.

#### Primary Research Question

The primary question for research is: what factors must a newly selected staff section leader in the SAF consider during the initial transition of assuming command to form an effective and efficient team while maintaining a stable level of performance?

#### Secondary Research Questions

To answer the primary research question, the following secondary questions must be answered:

1. What defines the SAF staff group/section as effective and efficient?
2. What factors must be considered regarding the team performance?
3. What challenges can a new leader on the SAF staff group/section expect in the beginning?
4. Given the environmental conditions, what factors most influence the time available for team development activities?
5. What determines a leader's priorities during their initial transition?

#### Assumptions

This research assumed there is an initial period after assuming command of a Serbian staff section that has unique challenges. The researcher also assumes that the transition period in SAF is similar to that expected in western military organizations and the US military.

### Definition of Terms

The researcher will provide the definitions of terms in context of the research that refers to military terms that would not be understood by a general reader, terms that are used in SAF, ordinary terms that are used differently in military parlance than in standard writing, abstract terms used with specific meanings or with applications to specific contexts and shorthand terms that will be used in place of lengthier phrases.

### Limitations

There are seven limitations associated with this research. First, this research will focus only on factors that influence decisions and actions performed by the leader of a SAF Staff Section during initial period after assuming command. Second, the research will consider only the initial period after assuming command during peacetime, without considering environmental conditions that are imposed by wartime conditions. Third, the research will be focused on leader's actions that are referring to a team building/development, and not on the other actions that are necessary after assuming command. Fourth, the number of officers that will participate and answer the survey questions is small because there are only so many officers who are fulfilling required conditions at the US Army CGSC, and officers in the SAF the researcher can contact. Fifth, the researcher will personally translate into English parts of the literature that are written in the Serbian language and are needed for this study. Sixth, available time will impose a significant limitation, and finally yet importantly, only a limited number of Serbian authors' literature that is translated into English will be used for the research.



### Significance

One of the most important duties of duty of a field grade officer is to be a leader. Most officers will assume command over a new team multiple times in his or her career. Those teams will differ in many ways, but the expected level of performance will immediately be high in every duty. Transition to new duty is a very challenging period for every leader and requires careful planning. It is also a period of opportunity, and if successful, leadership transition will facilitate future performance of both the leader and his team.

In the Serbian military officer's education system, leadership as a field of study, although recognized is not well represented. This study will provide needed information for field grade officers of the SAF to overcome difficulties as they experience transitions, reduce mistakes while building the new team, and assist him or her in setting conditions for a successful command. This research will offer an in-depth view of the factors that influence actions and decisions needed after assuming a new command, which will allow field grade officers more time to focus on other areas of their duty.

The researcher's motivation for this study is driven by the desire to contribute to the body of research which seeks to identify the role of the field grade officer as a leader, and to provide guidance for Serbian military officers to overcome difficulties of transition to a new leadership position, as well as to provide meaningful recommendations for building efficient and effective teams in the SAF.

### Conclusion

Although many factors can influence the organization's level of success, the role of a leader makes a significant difference. To be true leaders they must understand what

leadership is, what factors determine team effectiveness, and what contributes to building relationships between a leader and his team. One of the major challenges for field grade officers is to assume a new command. When an officer assumes command, there is an initial period of time during which the officer forms the foundation of his future command and leadership.

The SAF are involved in international military cooperation, mainly as a part of peacebuilding and peacekeeping coalition efforts in the world. This will require mutual understanding, within the military participating in the coalition. As a part of the interoperability skill set, leadership is one of the most important.

This chapter introduced the proposed thesis. It provided an overview, stated the primary and secondary research questions, established the limits of research, and provided reasons the research will be significant. Chapter 2 will examine the literature available for research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to determine what factors determine decisions and actions that have to be performed by the newly commissioned leader of a SAF staff group/section during the transition period of assuming command. This research also addresses forming an effective team, while maintaining an acceptable performance level of the section during the initial transition.

In order to present established literature written on the subject, and the various authors' thoughts and their respective arguments, the researcher will primarily use published books or available electronic copies. Considering the fact that leadership, team-building and related topics are contemporary; the researcher will also use available articles and internet sources that can offer the latest points of view.

First, the researcher will present information on the Serbian military environment and staff level organization, as well as SAF approach to leadership. Since all military leaders are part of an organization, the researcher will briefly present literature that refers to the definitions and types of the organizations. Then, the researcher will present an overview of leadership in general and different approaches to defining the leadership. Next, the researcher will present the literature that refers to a team and team building, its importance, and some possible ways to do it. The researcher will then present the literature about leadership roles and challenges in team building, and leadership transition after assuming a new position.

### Serbian Military Environment and Staff Level Organization

The SAF general staff is divided into departments following a J1 to J9 structure.<sup>10</sup> Every department encompasses several functions, and is subdivided into two or more staff sections (these sections may also be further divided into groups). The only person authorized to make major decisions is the head of the department, although he may delegate some of his authority to the section chiefs. Notionally, staff sections and groups within the sections consist of majors and lieutenant colonels. One staff section is usually in charge of one of the department's functions. Officers within the section are specialists in their own field of expertise, and only together, can they realize or accomplish all tasks within the section. Any member of the department can be a member of an interdepartmental working group.

As a member of the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and Partnership for Peace organizations, the Republic of Serbia has committed her armed forces to participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping in the world within the multinational initiatives. This implies the need for close cooperation and interoperability beyond the fields of organization, equipment, and procedures.<sup>11</sup>

The structure of the SAF general staff and teambuilding within the international community suggests a discussion by Peter G. Northouse on the importance of culture and

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<sup>10</sup> Serbian Army Official Website, "General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces," Army of Serbia, accessed 28 May 2014, <http://www.vs.rs/index.php?content=fb683d10-7cf9-102d-8874-00215e73a110>.

<sup>11</sup> Republic of Serbia, *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia* (Belgrade, Serbia: Ministry of Defence, October 2009), accessed 29 May 2014, [http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id\\_sadrzaja=4350](http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=4350); Republic of Serbia, *Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia* (Belgrade, Serbia: Ministry of Defence, October 2009), accessed 29 May 2014, [http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id\\_sadrzaja=4350](http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=4350).

leadership in organizations. In *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Northouse presents studies by House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta<sup>12</sup> known as the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program. In the study, GLOBE researchers developed nine cultural dimensions related to leadership: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and human orientation. Using these dimensions, GLOBE researchers created 10 regional clusters to provide a convenient way to analyze the similarities and differences between cultural groups (clusters).<sup>13</sup> The Eastern Europe Cluster included Greece, Hungary, Albania, Slovenia, Poland, Russia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. According to the findings, people in this cluster “tend to be forceful and supportive of their coworkers and to treat men and women equally.”<sup>14</sup> The findings also described them as “less likely to be achievement driven, to emphasize strategic planning, and to stress rules and laws as a way to maintain order.”<sup>15</sup>

GLOBE researchers also developed leadership profiles for each cluster. In the Eastern Europe cluster, a leader is described as a one who is “highly autonomous, makes decisions independently, and is to a certain degree inspiring, team oriented, and attentive to human needs.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Northouse, 387.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 392-393.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 395-396.

Based on Professor Geert Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture, the Hofstede Centre developed an on-line tool to get insights into national and organizational culture.<sup>17</sup> The Serbian society is described as one with a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place, centralization is popular, and subordinates expect to be told what to do. Furthermore, it is a collectivistic society with a long-term commitment to the member group. Precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, and security is an important element in individual motivation. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored. People have the perception that their actions are restrained by social norms and feel that indulging themselves is somewhat wrong. Serbian society is almost completely opposite of the United States.

In spite of all the similarities between militaries all over the world, national cultural traits define the organizational climate and culture, and strongly influence the way that they are internally organized and how the formal and informal relations are established. Additionally, sources and ways of applying the power are different which means that procedures and philosophies that work for one military might not work for another. It is the responsibility of each military to study the examples of others, but to use what is applicable and feasible within its own cultural and organizational boundaries.

### Organizations, Definitions and Types

Organizations are everywhere and are part of our everyday life. Either most people work in organizations, or their lives are strongly impacted by organizations

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<sup>17</sup> The Hofstede Centre, "Serbia," accessed 2 October 2014, <http://geert-hofstede.com/serbia.html>.

(government agencies, schools, hospitals, etc.).<sup>18</sup> According to the on-line Business

Dictionary, an organization is:

A social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals. All organizations have a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members, and subdivides and assigns roles, responsibilities, and authority to carry out different tasks. Organizations are open systems-they affect and are affected by their environment.<sup>19</sup>

Hugh J. Arnold and Daniel C. Feldman in their book *Organizational Behavior* state that three factors characterize all types of organizations: organizations are composed of individuals and groups, organizations are oriented toward the achievements of goals, and organizations employ specialization and coordination in order to accomplish their goals.<sup>20</sup> The authors emphasize a system point of view and state that within themselves organizations must trade off interdependencies among people, tasks, technology, structure, their transformational process, and broader environments in which they exist.<sup>21</sup>

The authors define organizational structure as a formal arrangement of operations and activities within an organization that allows the organization to achieve three interrelated goals: to define lines of responsibility and authority, to channel the flow of information, and to achieve coordination of the work activities of different individual

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh J. Arnold and Daniel C. Feldman, *Organizational Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1986), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Business Dictionary, "Organization," accessed 23 May 2014, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/organization.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold and Feldman, 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7.

employees.<sup>22</sup> The authors further identify four types of organizations: functional organization, divisional organizations, lateral relations, and matrix structures.<sup>23</sup>

In her book *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives*, Marry Jo Hatch presents several organizational theories, and states that organizations are “conceptualized as strategies, technologies, social structures, cultures, and physical structures that overlay and interpenetrate one another within the concept of an environment.”<sup>24</sup> From the social structure point of view, organizations are “comprised of a hierarchy of authority, a division of labor, and formal rules and procedures.”<sup>25</sup>

Organizational social structure can be measured using three variables: complexity, centralization, and formalization. With respect to these variables, structural forms of organization can be defined as mechanistic form, organic form, and bureaucracies.<sup>26</sup>

The author states that social structure is based upon repeated interactions between people, and is determined by differentiation of work activities, which indicates the major challenges of integrating the units, positions, and people within the organization.<sup>27</sup> From this point of view, organizational structure can be: simple structure, functional structure,

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<sup>22</sup> Arnold and Feldman, 241.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>24</sup> Marry Jo Hutch, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1997), 15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 168-170.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 180-181.



multi-divisional structure, and matrix structure.<sup>28</sup> Besides these, pure structures, organizations may be hybrid or network structured.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to understand that not all organizations are the same. They form for different purposes, they are structured differently, they have different lines of authorization and responsibility, and they exist in different cultural environments.

Leaders work within the organizations, influence their organization, and are influenced by the organization. Characteristics of the organization offer advantages to the leaders, but at the same time impose restrictions that must be taken into account.

### Leadership in General, Approaches and Definitions

The other framing concept for this research is leadership itself. Similar to the idea of organization, leadership is everywhere around us. In spite of the fact that leadership has existed throughout human history, scientific research of leadership did not begin until the 20th century.<sup>30</sup>

In *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Peter G. Northouse, provides numerous different attempts to define leadership. At the beginning of the 20th century, definitions emphasized control and centralization of power, moved on to the traits approach in the 1930s, and then emphasized a group approach in the 1940s. Definitions in the 1950s involved relationships that develop shared goals and effectiveness. In the 1960s, definitions evolved into behavior that influences people toward shared goals. The

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<sup>28</sup> Hutch, 182-190.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 190-191.

<sup>30</sup> Yukl, 2.

organizational behavior approach came into focus in the 1970s, and leadership was viewed as “initiating and maintaining groups or organizations to accomplish group or organizational goals.”<sup>31</sup> Definitions also included motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers. The beginning of the 21st century brought the recognition that leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux, and will continue to have different meanings for different people.<sup>32</sup>

Northouse finds four central elements that are key to understanding the concept of leadership: leadership is a process that involves influence, leadership occurs in groups, and leadership involves common goals. Defining leadership as a process means that it is a non-linear, two-way interactive event that occurs between leader and the followers. Although leaders and followers are closely connected, the leader has to initiate relationship, create communications, and maintain the relationship.<sup>33</sup>

Northouse further distinguishes leadership as a trait from leadership as a process, appointed leaders from emergent leadership, as well as concept of power, coercion, and management from leadership.<sup>34</sup> He also presents several theories—approaches to

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<sup>31</sup> Northhouse, 2-4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

leadership ranging from more traditional, leader-centric, and behavioral-centric, to recent approaches like servant leadership and authentic leadership.<sup>35</sup>

In his book *Leading Change*, John P. Kotter differentiates between management and leadership. He states that management is about planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and problem solving. On the other hand, leadership is about establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring people.<sup>36</sup>

Gary Yukl, in his book *Leadership in Organizations* defines leadership in a similar fashion, as a “process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplished shared objectives.”<sup>37</sup> Like Kotter, he differentiates between management and leadership.<sup>38</sup> The US Army defines leadership “as the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”<sup>39</sup>

Leadership is a concept that permeates almost all aspects of human society and to a degree may be presented as an allegory for the social aspect of life. There were, and still are many approaches to defining leadership, but whatever the approach is, most of

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<sup>35</sup> Northouse.

<sup>36</sup> John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 26.

<sup>37</sup> Yukl, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>39</sup> Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, para. 3.

the authors agree that leadership is a complex concept, and it is a leader's responsibility to influence followers, and lead the way toward the desired goal.

### Definitions of a Team, and Team Characteristics

Leaders do not exist without followers. Likewise, leadership as a process can occur only in groups or teams. Followers can be organized in different forms of groups. In order to fully understand leadership as a process, it is necessary to define and describe teams.

In her book *Making the Team: A Guide for Managers*, Leigh Thompson differentiates between a team and a working group. She defines a team as a "group of people who are interdependent with respect to information, resources, and skills and who seek to combine their efforts to achieve a common goal."<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, in a working group, people are not interdependent in an important fashion and are not working together toward a shared goal.<sup>41</sup> She also defines four types of teams in organizations: manager-led, self-managing (self-regulating), self-directing (self-designing) and self-governing team.<sup>42</sup> Although she raises the question: "Why should organizations have teams?" she provides at least three challenges of the future that suggest building and maintain effective teams will be very significant: specialization, competition, and emergence of information age.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Thompson, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

In order to answer the question: “What determines whether the team will perform successfully or not?” Thompson offers a model of teamwork. The model asserts that the context of the team (organizational context, team design, and team culture) affects a team’s essential conditions (team’s ability to perform effectively, build and sustain motivation, and coordinate people), and these essential conditions are determinants of the team’s performance—whether the team will be successful or not.<sup>44</sup>

Leigh Thompson further provides four criteria by which we can evaluate team effectiveness; productivity, satisfaction, individual well-being, and organizational gains.<sup>45</sup> Of these, team productivity is the most important as it requires that the team has a clear goal and ability to adapt to a changing environment.<sup>46</sup> Team satisfaction maintains and strengthens the capability of team members to work together as a whole on future projects in an effective manner.<sup>47</sup> Individual well-being means that teams should offer growth and development opportunities for its members.<sup>48</sup> Organizational gains come from the larger organization’s perspective. The essence of this criterion is integration into the organization as a whole. This means that teams must disseminate information and ideas in a timely and efficient manner with other units in the organization.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Thompson, 18.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

In a similar fashion, Peter Northouse defines a team as a specific type of group whose members are interdependent and share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish their goals. The author further states that teams have a specified function within an organization, and that team members have specified roles, and requisite knowledge and skills to perform these roles.<sup>50</sup>

Northouse presents practical characteristics of team excellence: clear, elevating goals; result-driven structure; competent team members; unified commitment; collaborative climate; standards of excellence; external support and recognition; and principled leadership.<sup>51</sup>

In his book *The First Time Manager's Guide to Teambuilding*, Gary S. Topchik also emphasizes interdependence and communication between team members, as well as common goals. The author lists five characteristics of a high-performance team: clearly defined role and responsibilities for each team member, open and honest communication among team members and between the manager and team members, a supportive and knowledgeable manager/leader, ability to make decisions freely, and rewards and recognition when goals are met or exceeded. The author also includes a recommendation for ongoing training in both technical and team skills, and team leader training.<sup>52</sup>

Topchik defines two major types of teams: the ongoing team and the project team. The members of an ongoing team stay together indefinitely, such as people who work in

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<sup>50</sup> Northouse, 287.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 299-303.

<sup>52</sup> Gary S. Topchik, *The First Time Manager's Guide to Teambuilding* (Saranac Lake, NY: AMACOM Books, 2007), 6-7.

the same department or unit. Team members usually have the same status or title, except for the manager who is a level above. On the other hand, project teams are formed for particular purpose. They are often cross functional and they usually disband when the project is over. Members of a project team may come from different levels.<sup>53</sup>

Topchik further states that there are three closely interrelated factors that determine the model of the team: current subject-matter expertise of team members, nature of teamwork, and culture of the organization or department. Based on these factors, the author distinguishes four team models: the work group, the developing team, the participative team, and the autonomous team.<sup>54</sup>

Gary Yukl emphasizes complementary skills of the team members, among other characteristics. He also identifies six defining characteristics, and according to these characteristics identifies four types of teams: functional operating team, cross-functional team, self-management team, and top executive team.<sup>55</sup>

In their article “Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams,” Lynda Gratton and Tamara Erickson provide four characteristics required for team success, but they also warn us that at the same time these same four characteristics may undermine success. These four characteristics are: team size, virtual participation of the team members, team structure—members’ diversity regarding the background and experience, and team composition regarding the educational level of its members and their level of

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<sup>53</sup> Topchik, 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 11-22.

<sup>55</sup> Yukl, 319.

specialization. Gratton and Erickson further identify the need for collaborative behavior in a complex team environment as a way to increase team effectiveness.<sup>56</sup>

In his book, *Organizational Behavior*, Colonel Ranko Lojic, Ph.D., professor at the Military Academy of The Republic of Serbia, defines teams as groups whose members have complementary skills, and are engaged for common goals and purpose, for which accomplishment they develop a unified approach and share responsibility.<sup>57</sup> He further states that characteristics of the effective teams are: clear goals, relevant skills, mutual trust, shared commitment, good communication, negotiation skills, and leadership. Team effectiveness is conditioned by internal (team structure, training, evaluation system, reward system) and external (providing assets and/or resources) support.<sup>58</sup>

Similar to definitions of organizations and leadership, there are different approaches to defining the team and determining conditions for team success. However, most authors find that there is a difference between a group and a team, which mirrors itself in interdependence of the team members and mutual coordination toward the shared common goals. It is important for leaders who are facing transition to put the team into

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<sup>56</sup> Lynda Gratton and Tamara J. Erickson, "Eight Ways to Build Collaborative Teams," *Harvard Business Review* (November 2007), accessed 21 May 2014, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.lumen.cgsccar1.com/ehost/detail/detail?sid=fd5a8b-917c-4985-b9b7-db02cfd7cfd%40sessionmgr4004&vid=0&hid=4201&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZvc3QtbGI2ZQ%3d%3d#db=bth&AN=27040494>.

<sup>57</sup> Ranko Lojić, *Organizational Behavior* (Belgrade, Serbia: Media Center Odbrana, 2011), 145.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-149.



the larger organizational context, and to understand what kind of team they will lead, what the characteristics of that team are, and what would make their teams successful.

### Team Building

Leigh Thompson argues there are three key aspects (critical internal dynamics) of building a team: the task, the people, and the relationship among team members.<sup>59</sup> The task means to answer the question what practices and structures need to be put in place.<sup>60</sup> Teams should consist of people who are best suited to do the work.<sup>61</sup> The author emphasizes the significance of the socialization between team members. Team socialization is essential if team members are to work together and coordinate their efforts.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Thompson also warns that sometimes it is more important to have a well-designed team than a team with a good team leader.<sup>63</sup>

Gary S. Topchik offers a model for team building using 10 steps: getting upper-management support, define the purpose of team, identify time frames, select the team members, meeting with the team, team-members openings, share the overall purpose, team name, create the team mission statement and goals, core team issues, and establishing team norms.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Thompson, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>64</sup> Topchik, 44-58.

Gary Yukl offers a guideline for teambuilding in the form of eight team-building behaviors and procedures: (1) emphasize common interests and values; (2) use ceremonies and rituals; (3) use symbols to develop identification with the group; (4) encourage and facilitate social interaction; (5) tell people about group activities and achievements; (6) conduct process analysis sessions; (7) conduct alignment sessions; and (8) increase incentives for mutual cooperation.<sup>65</sup>

In their article “A Guide to Building High Performing Teams,” Gordon J. Curphy and Robert T. Hogan, offer “The Rocket Model” that provides framework for understanding how to improve team functioning and performance.<sup>66</sup> According to the authors, in order to form a high performing team, one should determine team context, define clear purpose or goals (mission), determine who is on the team (talent), establish the rules by which the team operates (norms), increase the level of commitment and equipment needed (buy-in and power), as well as the level of team cohesiveness (morale).<sup>67</sup>

Lynda Gratton and Tamara J. Erickson isolated eight practices to build collaborative teams. These practices fall into four general categories. The first one is executive support, and it consists of three practices: investing in signature relationship practices, modeling collaborative behavior, and mentoring and coaching—especially on an informal basis. Next category is human resources, which encompasses two practices:

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<sup>65</sup> Yukl, 335.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon J. Curphy and Robert T. Hogan, *A Guide to Building High Performing Teams* (North Oaks, MN: Curphy Consulting Corporation, 2011), 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-6.

ensuring the requisite skills, and supporting a strong sense of community. The strength of the team leader is the third category and it is referring to assigning team leaders that are both task- and relationship-oriented. The last category is the structure of the team itself, and it includes building on heritage relationships, and understanding role clarity and task ambiguity.<sup>68</sup>

In his article “Team Building: Learn from a Great Coach,” David Parmenter brings the experience of a softball coach, who won two consecutive world championships, on building a team to win. It is comprised of nine conditions: strategy (goal, critical success factors, resources needed, and obstacles or constraints), leadership, empowerment (transfer responsibility), planning for a three-day week (expect unexpected), handling specialists, integrity and honesty, use critics different perspective, organize a team overnight activity, and adopt a winning coaching style (deliver a quality service to every person, keep your messages positive, ensure that each performance goal is owned by the team, focus on shared leadership, create a culture where no one cares who gets the credit, key tasks must be easy to understand and able to be performed under pressure, accept mistakes and analyze the decisions that led to the mistake).<sup>69</sup>

Whenever it comes to a leader’s transition it affects team dynamic, and at least some changes are inevitable. Leaders need to be aware of that, as well as the fact that it is their role to lead the change. In a way, every change leads to a new team, and leaders must know how to (re)build an effective team.

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<sup>68</sup> Gratton and Erickson.

<sup>69</sup> David Parmenter, “Team Building Learn from a Great Coach,” *Leadership Excellence* (March 2011): 19.

### Leadership's Challenges in Team-building

According to Leigh Thompson, managing effective teams involves two sets of responsibilities: managing the internal dynamics of the team itself and managing the external dynamics.<sup>70</sup> The author emphasizes the decision making process as the key activity that teams must do, regardless of their governance structure (self-managing, manager-led, or self-directing).<sup>71</sup> The author states that the quality of the group decision-making process is impacted by conformity, which can lead to any of the four main pitfalls of the group decision making: groupthink, escalation of commitment, the Abilene paradox (pluralistic ignorance), and group polarization.<sup>72</sup>

Equally important, Leigh Thompson emphasizes managing the external environment and the team relationship to a larger organization. This is essential because those who are the team's customers often judge team productivity.<sup>73</sup> Managing the external environment is determined by team boundaries, external roles that team members play, networking within the organization, and physical space and time.<sup>74</sup>

Regarding the team leader's role, Leigh Thompson warns of the existence of the team paradox: the fact that the leaders are often necessary for teamwork (to shape goals, coordinate efforts and motivate members), but their very existence threatens teamwork

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<sup>70</sup> Thompson, 59.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 110-129.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 170.

(traditional notions of leadership, top-down and command and control approach).<sup>75</sup> The author also emphasizes the fact that leadership style and strategy must be integrated in the organizational context (bureaucratic or commitment organization).<sup>76</sup> As a solution, Thompson states that leaders should stream towards empowering team members and being a leader among equals rather than a leader of the followers. When the leader is the coordinator or assembler, activities are performed better, teams work better, and the organizations as more successful.<sup>77</sup> Northouse also offers a model for team effectiveness. This model emphasizes the leader's role that has special responsibilities and attempts to achieve team goals by analyzing the internal and external situation, and then selects and implements the appropriate behaviors to ensure team effectiveness.<sup>78</sup>

When describing the leader-member exchange theory, Peter G. Northouse says that leadership develops progressively. Before reaching a high degree of mutual trust and respect, both the leader and subordinates must start with their prescribed organizational roles, and then test whether the subordinates are interested in taking on more responsibilities and whether the leader is willing to provide more challenges for subordinates.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Thompson, 188.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 200-202.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 207-212.

<sup>78</sup> Northouse, 290-291.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 166-167.

Gary S. Topchik emphasizes two dangerous conditions that managers can often fall victim to: over managing (micromanaging) and undermanaging.<sup>80</sup> He presents two major sets of skills that a leader must have in order to form a high-performing team: primary skills (planning, organizing, developing, monitoring, evaluating), and leadership behaviors that will make team members want to do what they are supposed to do instead of feel like they have to do what they are supposed to do.<sup>81</sup>

Topchik also identifies major challenges that leaders may face while they are trying to form a high-performance team. Most of these challenges are related to the leader, organization, or combination of both, and they are: lack of clear goals, wrong team members, poor use or no use of the primary skills and leadership behaviors, lack of training for team members, work overload, absence of reward and accountability system, meaningless or boring assignments, or unrealistic deadlines.<sup>82</sup>

Gary Yukl agrees with Leigh Thompson's division on internal and external dynamics that influence the leader, presents demands–constraints–choices pattern, and further elaborates this pattern into bureaucratic rules; policies and regulations; legal constraints (labor laws); environmental, securities and safety regulations; resources – facilities, equipment, funding, supplies, personnel, and support services; technology; and physical locations of facilities.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Topchik, 23-24.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 31-33.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>83</sup> Yukl, 33.

In his article “Why Teams Fail: The 10 Most Common Reasons,” Dean M. Brenner presents 10 reasons why teams fail, distributing the responsibility more on leadership than on team members.<sup>84</sup> According to Brenner, leaders are responsible for creating a vision, leading by example, as well as for motivating team members toward shared goals. He further emphasizes a need for flexible leadership, but also stresses a need for leaders to deal with the team members who perform poorly. Above all, Brenner calls for mutual respect and trust within the teams as an overarching and pervasive necessity toward which all the other activities should lead.

Leadership transition will, like every other process that involves human beings, have its challenges, and the complexity of the factors involved in a period of transition to a new leader is clearly recognized by the literature discussed. Most authors agree on the existence of external and internal dynamics that challenge the leaders. Leaders must be familiar with these challenges. Only then, can they determine the priorities, assess the risk, and develop strategy to mitigate these risks. In other words knowing and understanding challenges will improve the leaders’ situational awareness and allow them to complete their first mission—successful transition.

#### Leadership Transition

In his book *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies For New Leaders At All Levels*, Michael Watkins states that “given the stakes it is surprising how little good

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<sup>84</sup> Dean M. Brenner, “Why Teams Fail: The 10 Most Common Reasons,” *Sales and Service Excellence* 12, no. 9 (September 2012): 9.

guidance is available to new leaders about how to transition more effectively and efficiently into new roles.”<sup>85</sup>

Leigh L. Thompson states that it is important for teams to develop a positive reputation within the first few months. Early on, based on this initial impression, a negative or positive escalating cycle in terms of both team reputation and team performance begins. It is critical to obtain the support of the environment if a team is to enter a positive escalation cycle.<sup>86</sup>

Linda A. Hill identifies four tasks of transformation: learning what it means to be a manager, developing interpersonal judgment, gaining self-knowledge, and coping with stress and emotions. She indirectly identifies transition period as the first year.<sup>87</sup>

Michael Watkins identifies a transition period, and describes it as a period of opportunity, a chance for a leader to start afresh, but also as a period of a leader’s vulnerability, without established working relationships and a detailed understanding of a leader’s role.<sup>88</sup> He defines the duration of a transition period and marks the Breakeven Point—“the point at which a new leader has contributed as much value to their new

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>86</sup> Thompson, 173.

<sup>87</sup> Linda A. Hill, *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003), 6-8.

<sup>88</sup> Watkins *The First 90 Days* (2003), 1.



organizations as they have consumed from it.”<sup>89</sup> According to Watkins, a new leader should reach the breakeven point after 90 days of assuming his new duty.<sup>90</sup>

Watkins also offers a road map for the transition period, presented in a form of ten key transition challenges<sup>91</sup> or essential transition tasks:<sup>92</sup> promote yourself, accelerate your learning, match strategy to situation, secure early wins, negotiate success, achieve alignment, build your team, create coalitions, keep your balance, and expedite everyone. The ultimate goal for a new leader is to manage the transition period beyond a sink-or-swim approach.<sup>93</sup> However, Watkins also warns that transition challenges are different depending on the situational factors. A strategy for successful transition should be tailored according to the specific circumstances, and he offers diagnostic tool called the STARS model. Using this model, a new leader has to determine early on whether his transition is a start-up, turnaround, realignment or sustain success situation.<sup>94</sup> Every transition type will present unique set of challenges and opportunities.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 1.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 12-14.

<sup>92</sup> Michael D. Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2013), accessed 9 August 2014, [http://books.google.ca/books?id=QGkHs4pExOQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+First+90+Days,+Updated+and+Expanded&hl=en&sa=X&ei=cB7pU\\_a2I9TJsQTtgoGwCw&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20First%2090%20Days%2C%20Updated%20and%20Expanded&f=false](http://books.google.ca/books?id=QGkHs4pExOQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+First+90+Days,+Updated+and+Expanded&hl=en&sa=X&ei=cB7pU_a2I9TJsQTtgoGwCw&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=The%20First%2090%20Days%2C%20Updated%20and%20Expanded&f=false).

<sup>93</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 237.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

He additionally identifies several barriers to making a successful transition for an outside hired manager: there is no familiarity with the organizational structure and the existence of informal networks of information and communication, there is no familiarity with the corporate culture, new people are unknown to the organization, and a long tradition of hiring from within leads to managers being viewed as outsiders.<sup>96</sup> In his later work, Watkins identified seven transition traps<sup>97</sup> that leaders may face during their first ninety days. In 2007, mostly based on Watkins' work, Appelbaum and Valero conducted research among 175 managers in order to "prioritize do's and don'ts for a newly promoted manager."<sup>98</sup> According to their research, the first three most important traps for the newly promoted manager are: being isolated, coming with the answer, and failing to build coalition. On the other hand, the first three most important principles for success are: leverage the team before entry, organize to learn, and create a personal vision.<sup>99</sup>

Mike Hawkins also recognizes the importance of the leadership transition to a new duty, and similar to Watkins determines the duration of transition period to 90 days.

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<sup>96</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 8.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Watkins, "Taking Charge." *Government Executive* 36, no. 6 (15 April 2004): 76-77; Michael Watkins, "The First Ninety Days," *Association Management* (August 2004): 52.

<sup>98</sup> Steven H. Appelbaum and Miguel Valero, "The Crucial First Three Months: An Analysis of Leadership Transition Traps and Successes," *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge* 11, no. 1 (March 2007): 4.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

He offers a list of 20 elements for leaders to consider when they plan their first 90 days.<sup>100</sup>

The US Army recognizes complexity and the importance of leadership transitions, and the fact that transitions occur frequently, particularly during this era of persistent conflict and high operations tempo. In the *Army Handbook for Leadership Transitions*, the US Army offers a precise step-by-step model for managing leadership transition. The model consists of six phases: preparation (notification to D-1), first day (D day), initial assessment (D+1 to D+30), organizational alignment and team building, (D+31 to D+60), establishing routines (D+61 to D+90), and sustaining (D+91+). Each phase consists of several steps. According to this handbook, leadership transition should take about 90 days. Although presented as a checklist, the *Army Handbook for Leadership Transitions* could also be viewed in a non-linear fashion, and more as a menu of ideas and best practices for the leader to choose.<sup>101</sup>

Although time available for transition to a new leadership position may vary and depends on a number of organizational factors, most authors agree that successful transition can be achieved within 90 days. Furthermore, importance of the transition to a new duty is clearly recognized as a beginning of a duty cycle that has to be carefully planned and executed through balanced managing of both internal-team building activities and external-organizational conditions and relations. It is of the utmost

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<sup>100</sup> Mike Hawkins, *Your First Ninety Days in a New Management Position*, AlpineLink Corporation, 2011, accessed 26 August 2014, [http://www.alpinelink.com/Docs/Your\\_First\\_Ninety\\_Days\\_in\\_a\\_New\\_Management\\_Position.pdf](http://www.alpinelink.com/Docs/Your_First_Ninety_Days_in_a_New_Management_Position.pdf).

<sup>101</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Handbook for Leadership Transitions* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Center, Center for Army Leadership, 2011), 2-3.

importance that leaders are aware of what is expected from them and their teams, factors within and outside their team that influence most how long that transition period will last, challenges that they will experience during the transition period, and what the indicators are that successful transition has occurred. Only then will leaders be able to determine their priorities and decide what would be the most important characteristics of a new leader during the transition period.

### Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter, the researcher presented available sources on the SAF general staff organization, together with Serbian social environment from a leadership perspective, and the SAF point of view on leadership. Then, the researcher presented literature that refers to organizations as a wider concept. The researcher also presented leadership as the pervasive and framing concept for this research, through scientific approaches to leadership, and leadership definitions. In order to fully understand leadership as a process, the researcher presented literature that defines and describes teams, followed by descriptions of teambuilding activities.

Next, the researcher reviewed the literature regarding leadership challenges in team-building process, as well as leaders' responsibilities, that included managing the internal dynamics of the team itself and managing the external dynamics. Finally, the researcher presented available literature that refers to a leadership transition, its description, and guidance for the new leaders about how to transition more effectively and efficiently after assuming their new positions.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to find what factors determine decisions and actions that have to be performed by the newly commissioned leader of a SAF general staff group/section during the transition period of assuming command. To answer the primary research question, issues such as effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF staff section, the most influential factors on the SAF staff section's performance, characteristics of the leadership transition period, as well as leaders' challenges and priorities during the leadership transition in the SAF are addressed. This chapter presents the research design, explains the sample population selection, data collection, methods of data analysis, and how validity and reliability of the research will be achieved toward the goal of providing resolutions for transition translation issues.<sup>102</sup>

#### Design of the Research

This research is a qualitative study with social constructivism as an underlining philosophy.<sup>103</sup> Qualitative research is “interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.”<sup>104</sup> As such, this research is focused on the process of leadership

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<sup>102</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 265.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 5.

transition in Serbian Armed Forces, and seeks an understanding of what influences this process during the leader's transition to a new duty. The researcher will present his understanding of officers' experiences of the leadership transition period in the SAF, hoping that presented findings will help identify good practices and/or improve some of the not-so-good practices. Social constructivism as a philosophy assumes that there are multiple realities, or interpretations of a single event. Individuals form their understanding through interaction with others, and through historical and cultural norms of their environment.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, this research will present interpretations of the leader's transition period related to the specific environment of the SAF.

In order to answer the primary research question, secondary research questions cover SAF staff section effectiveness and efficiency, SAF staff section performance, SAF leadership transition challenges, available time for leadership transition, and leaders' priorities during transition. The researcher used a Cross-sectional Survey<sup>106</sup> as the survey design, seeking a description of the current experience and thoughts on leadership transition in the SAF.

### Sample Selection

For this research, the author will use nonprobability purposeful and convenience sampling<sup>107</sup> in order to interview, and gain insights from the officers who are in adequate

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<sup>105</sup> Merriam, 8-9.

<sup>106</sup> Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step by Step Guide*. 4th ed. (Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles, The Langley Research Institute, 2009), 65-75.

<sup>107</sup> Merriam, 79.

positions to give relevant opinions.<sup>108</sup> The sample population will consist of two groups. One group consists of field grade officers who have held an O-4 position or higher in SAF general staff (officers who are appointed to a major's or higher position) for at least three years, who preferably spent some time as an organizational level leader, and have at least five years of active service in troop units with experience as a direct level leader. The second group consists of international military students at the US Army CGSC from Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Slovenia. Both groups consist of officers who have experience serving in their own respective armed forces in the direct leadership roles as well as experience serving in organizational leadership roles. The countries mentioned above are chosen because they belong to a similar cultural milieu, with armed forces that function in a similar fashion as the SAF.

#### Data Collection

For the purpose of this research, data will be collected through the cross sectional survey questions,<sup>109</sup> sent and received via e-mail. Due to the characteristics of the sample groups, in addition to the fact that all the participants are officers who are at the moment engaged either in their offices or as CGSC students, this method will allow participants to answer the questions using as much time as they need, and using language they prefer. Moreover, remoteness and time difference between the United States and The Republic of Serbia will make the other methods extremely difficult or almost impossible to conduct. The researcher will send an invitation letter in both the Serbian and English

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<sup>108</sup> Merriam, 77.

<sup>109</sup> Fink, 65-75.

languages via e-mail to all participants (see appendix A). The researcher will conduct surveys, in the Serbian language, via e-mail with the SAF participants (see appendix B). The answers will be returned to the researcher in the same way. The researcher will provide a printed and an electronic copy of the interview questions for the participants who are students at the US Army CGSC. Due to English being the secondary language for the officers in CGSC, two versions of the survey questions were provided, one in English and the other in Serbian. Officers will answer the survey questions in the language that is more suitable for them, and deliver their answers via e-mail (electronic copy).

In order to provide confidentiality of the interviewed officers, the researcher will send all participants an Informed Consent (see appendix C) via e-mail that will not require their signature. Informed Consent for the officers in the SAF will be translated to the Serbian language by the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher will delete all identifying data from the participants' answers to survey questions, and substitute them with a code number. The code numbers from one to 20 will be assigned to every officer from the SAF, and likewise the numbers from 30 to 39 will be assigned to officers at the US Army CGSC. Once the identifying data are deleted and substituted with the code number, original e-mails from the participants will be permanently deleted.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of finding the meaning of collected data.<sup>110</sup> In order to analyze collected data the researcher will use constant comparative method. Collected

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<sup>110</sup> Merriam, 176.



data will be arranged in the following initial categories: (1) effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF staff section; (2) the most influential factors on the SAF staff section's performance; (3) characteristics of the leadership transition period; (4) the most influential factors on the duration of the leadership transition period; (5) the desired end state of the leadership transition period in the SAF; (6) leader's priorities during the leadership transition in the SAF; and (7) challenges for the leader on the SAF staff section to expect in the transition period. Once data are collected and categories assigned to data, the researcher will present inter-relationships between categories,<sup>111</sup> assuming that interrelation exists.

#### Validity and Reliability

Accepting the fact that “qualitative researchers can never capture an objective truth or reality,”<sup>112</sup> validity of the research deals with the question of how research findings are congruent with the reality.<sup>113</sup> Reliability deals with the question of whether the results would be the same if the research were repeated.<sup>114</sup> Since human behavior is never static and replication of the research would rarely produce the same results, reliability of qualitative research is about whether the findings are going to show the true meaning of the collected data.<sup>115</sup> Although the researcher provided the information about

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<sup>111</sup> Merriam, 188-193.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 221.

how many participants responded in the same way, because the size of sample population is small, it is important to say that the pure number of participants who repeated the same answer does not reflect the significance of the answer itself. It is also very important to notice that all data will be interpreted by the researcher as a primary instrument, and that the findings will unavoidably be influenced by researcher's bias that may come out of the fact that the researcher is appointed as a SAF general staff officer.

### Translation Issues

Because English is not their native language, participants from the SAF will answer the questions in the language that is more suitable for them. The officers who are international military students at the US Army CGC will answer the questions in English. Transcripts of the interviews that are in the Serbian language will be translated to English by the researcher to the best of his ability, and data analysis will be conducted in English. Although it is recommended, a "back translation"<sup>116</sup> strategy will not be provided due to the lack of time and resources.

### Conclusion

Taking into account the purpose of this research, it will be a qualitative study with social constructivism as an underlining philosophy, and inductive in its nature. The researcher will use nonprobability purposeful and convenience sampling in order to gain insights from the officers who are in an adequate position to give opinions relevant to the research topic. For the purpose of this research, data collection will be obtained from the selected literature and by conducting surveys. In order to analyze collected data, the

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<sup>116</sup> Merriam, 270.

researcher will use the constant comparative method. Finally, the researcher to the best of his knowledge will translate transcripts of the interviews that are originally in the Serbian language. Based on the research methodology shown in this chapter, the researcher will present his findings in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research is to offer an in-depth view of the factors that influence actions and decisions needed to be performed by the newly commissioned leader of a SAF general staff group/section during the transition period of assuming command. Study findings are presented through five sections that respond to the following issues from the secondary research questions: effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF staff section, the most influential factors on the SAF staff group's/section's performance, SAF staff group/section leader's challenges during the transition period, the most influential factors on time available for transition, and the leader's priorities during initial transition. Each section in this chapter consists of three parts: selected literature reflections that present the selected process from the literature, survey data analysis, and summary that ascertains similarities and differences between the literature and the data.

#### Study Findings

The answer to the primary research question: what factors must a newly selected staff section leader in the SAF consider during the initial transition of assuming command to form an effective and efficient team while maintaining a stable level of performance? is given by answering the secondary research questions.

## Effectiveness and Efficiency of the SAF Staff Group/Section

### Selected Literature Reflections

Literature provided in chapter 2 provides practical characteristics of team excellence. According to Northouse, the characteristics of excellence are: clear and elevating goals, result-driven structure, competent team members; unified commitment, collaborative climate, standards of excellence, external support and recognition, and principled leadership.<sup>117</sup> These characteristics may be extended with Topchik's characteristics of: clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each team member, ability to make decisions freely, and his recommendation for ongoing training in both technical and team skills, and team leader training.<sup>118</sup>

### Survey Data Analysis

When respondents were asked: what is most important for a staff group/section to be effective? they described several different factors. Five participants listed precise job description and responsibilities of each staff group/section member, as well as purpose, mission, and tasks of the group/section as a whole, and everyday communication among members in all aspects of the work of common interest. Four listed expertise and professionalism of the staff group/section members, and leader's ability, while four participants also described the need for assigning the tasks according to the personal preferences of staff group/section members. Three participants further emphasized adequate staff group/section structure and size, and two highlighted establishing the

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<sup>117</sup> Northouse, 299-303.

<sup>118</sup> Topchik, 6-7.

evaluation process, possibility for an immediate feedback from the staff group/section members, and constructive criticism in case the work is not well done. One participant pointed to the shared understanding about organizational goals followed by clearly established priorities for the execution. Finally yet importantly, one participant listed the need for adequate resources.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, the participants responded to: what is most important for a staff group/section to be efficient? Responses included coordination (work plans on daily and weekly bases), information flow within the staff group/section, and mutual interchangeability of the staff group/section members, as well as motivating staff group/section members by giving them the tasks that will present a challenge for them, which was emphasized by four participants. Two participants also emphasized representation of diverse expertise within the staff group/section, and variety of personalities, as well as the need for constant education and training activities for the staff group/section members. Finally, one participant highlighted that it is important to simplify procedures and allow creativeness of the staff group/section members, and not to insist on formalities if they are slowing down the work tempo.

### Summary

The participants described group/section effectiveness and efficiency almost identically to the literature. Although not in the same words, the participants listed all of the characteristics presented by Northouse and Topchik. Despite the fact that all participants are military officers, in addition to the characteristics mentioned above, the participants listed two more: procedures as simple as possible, with no unnecessary formalities, and diverse expertise and variety of personalities of the team members.

## The Most Influential Factors on the SAF Staff Group's/Section's Performance

### Selected Literature Reflections

Topchik identified major challenges that leaders may face while trying to form high-performance teams. They are: lack of clear goals, wrong team members, poor use or no use of the primary skills and leadership behaviors, lack of training for team members, work overload, absence of reward and accountability system, meaningless or boring assignments, or unrealistic deadlines.<sup>119</sup> Leigh Thompson emphasized managing external environment and the team relationship to a larger organization. This is essential because team productivity is often judged by those who are the team's customers.<sup>120</sup> Regarding the team leader's role, Leigh Thompson warns of the existence of the team paradox: the fact that the leaders are often necessary for teamwork (to shape goals, coordinate efforts, and motivate members), but their very existence threatens teamwork (traditional notions of leadership, top-down, and command and control approach).<sup>121</sup> Gary Yukl agrees with Leigh Thompson's division on internal and external dynamics that influence the leader, presents demands–constrains–choices pattern, and further elaborates this pattern into bureaucratic rules; policies and regulations; legal constrains (labor laws); environmental, securities, and safety regulations; resources—facilities, equipment, funding, supplies, personnel, and support services; technology; and physical locations of facilities.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Topchik, 36.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, 169.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>122</sup> Yukl, 33.

## Survey Data Analysis

The participants described factors both within and outside the staff group/section that most influence group/section performance. As internal factors, nine participants listed group/section cohesion, interpersonal relationship, and mutual trust, and eight of them listed communication and cooperation between the team members. Four participants emphasized the competencies and the expertise of the team members as well as work organizational climate and the culture that have significant impact on the performance of a group/section. Additionally, three participants listed work organization inside the section, and two listed shared goals and tasks. Furthermore, one participant highlighted importance of the planned and gradual renewal and integration of the staff group/section members in order to provide longer periods for the team members to work side-by-side.

When asked about external factors that influence staff group/section performance, the participants listed multiple factors. Six participants emphasized pressure generated by superiors which is displayed through indistinctness and the imprecision of the tasks that are given to the staff group/section, and four listed unrealistic superior's expectations, and unrealistic deadlines for tasks completion, as well as level of cooperation with other organizational units within the staff, and two listed increased workload. Three participants highlighted acknowledgement of the staff group/section role and recognition of the importance of staff group/section expert recommendation, which would prevent superiors from imposition of solution, regardless of the group/section recommendation. Furthermore, two participants emphasized importance of the respect and appreciation of the staff group/section performance from the superior command. Three participants also



emphasized the law and organizational procedures, and two of them pointed to the lack of resources.

### Summary

The participants described factors that influence team performance in a slightly different way than the selected literature. They did not explicitly describe factors such as reward and accountability systems, or boring and meaningless assignments. However, the participants described in detail managing external environment, additionally emphasizing pressure from superiors in the form of increased workload and unrealistic expectations. The participants further listed a superior's recognition and appreciation of a group's/section's work, as well as respect toward a team's recommendations. Finally, participants described the need for the planned and gradual renewal and integration of the new team members over the longer period.

### SAF Staff Group/Section Leader's Challenges during the Transition Period

#### Selected Literature Reflections

Watkins offered a road map for the transition period, presented in the form of 10 key transition challenges:<sup>123</sup> promote yourself, accelerate your learning, match strategy to situation, secure early wins, negotiate success, achieve alignment, build your team, create coalitions, keep your balance, and expedite everyone. He additionally identifies several barriers to making a successful transition, for an outside hired manager: there is no familiarity with the organizational structure and the existence of informal networks of information and communication, there is no familiarity with the corporate culture, new

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<sup>123</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 12-14.

people are unknown to the organization, and a long tradition of hiring from within results in the managers being viewed as outsiders.<sup>124</sup> However, Watkins also warns that transition challenges are different depending on the situational factors. Strategy for successful transition should be tailored according to the specific circumstances, and Watkins offers a diagnostic tool called the STARS model. Using this model a new leader has to determine early on whether his transition is a start-up, turnaround, realignment or sustain success situation.<sup>125</sup> Every transition type will present unique set of challenges and opportunities.<sup>126</sup> In 2007, mostly based on Watkins' work, Appelbaum and Valero conducted related research and presented the most important traps for the newly promoted manager: being isolated, coming with the answer, failing to build coalition, setting unrealistic expectation, being captured by the wrong people, attempting too much, and staying too long with the existing team.<sup>127</sup>

#### Survey Data Analysis

When asked what challenges a new leader on a staff group/section will experience during the transition period, participants described several challenges. First, eight participants emphasized undefined job descriptions for team members, and/or violated interpersonal relations between group/section members, as well as various individual goals of the group/section members. This indicates that there is no organization within

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<sup>124</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 8.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 10-12.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>127</sup> Appelbaum and Valero, 6.

the group/section, no synergy and unity of effort, and that the subordinates act as a simple sum of the individuals, but not as a team. In this case, team-building activities would have to start from the zero level. Seven participants described special challenges that are reflected in the lack of superior's understanding and his immediate expectations that everything needs to be improved right now and his ignorance of the change that happened (at least there is a new leader on the team). Five participants described the challenge of acceptance from the group/section members. This situation may occur when the group/section had its own different candidate either within or outside the team, or when lack of desire for change exists among the members of the group. Furthermore, two participants pointed out that subordinates may not have required a level of expertise to deal with their everyday tasks, and may need additional help and guidance to deal with problems, and one participant highlighted inadequate manning of the group/section, which is not unusual, but would only make things worse.

On the leader's personal side, four participants described challenges that are related to the possibility that a new leader would need to learn and accommodate in case he comes from a different line of work. For example, complications could exist for a leader who came from an operations line of work that requires agility, speed and more intuitive actions to a human resources position that requires significant analysis and fewer actions. As another challenge, four participants emphasized the need for changing his previous work methodology and leadership style. Additionally one participant described, as a special challenge leader's unrealistic and inappropriate personal expectations of his performance on the new job.

## Summary

When participants described challenges that a new leader could expect during the transition period, they did not list some from the selected literature; such as promoting yourself, securing early wins, expedite (empower) others, or creating coalitions. Instead, they described a few challenges not mentioned in the selected literature, such as a superior's increased expectations, the possibility of a team member's inadequate level of expertise, and inadequate manning of the staff group/section.

### The Most Influential Factors on Time Available for Transition

#### Selected Literature Reflections

Michael Watkins identified a transition period, and described it as a period of opportunity, a chance for a leader to start afresh, but also as a period of the leader's vulnerability, without an established working relationship and a detailed understanding of a leader's role.<sup>128</sup> He defined the duration of a transition period and marks the breakeven point—"the point at which the new leader has contributed as much value to their new organization as they have consumed from it."<sup>129</sup> However, Watkins also warned that strategy for successful transition should be tailored according to the specific circumstances, and transition type with its unique set of challenges and opportunities.<sup>130</sup> Duration of the transition period and its success would also depend on different factors

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<sup>128</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

such as “level of organization, whether the new leader is an insider or outsider, whether he has formal authority, and whether he is taking over successful or troubled group.”<sup>131</sup>

The US Army also recognizes complexity of leadership transitions, and considers that leadership transition depends on various factors, such as operations tempo, type of organization or unit, level of leadership position, and the leader’s experience in transitions.<sup>132</sup> Although available time for transition to a new leadership position may vary and depends on a number of organizational factors, most authors agree that successful transition can be achieved within 90 days.

### Survey Data Analysis

Eight participants described that a successful transition has occurred when a positive climate has been developed, and team members are offering improvements in ways to do the job. Further, seven participants specified that at the end of the transition period, a new leader fully reviewed the role of groups/sections in the system, clearly and precisely defined the tasks given by the superior command, and fully reviewed the possibilities of their group/section as a whole and each individual within. Six participants highlighted that a transition was over when a new leader created the necessary authority with subordinates and superiors, and is accepted in the collective, which means that he was recognized as a leader of the team, and team members utilize the leader as an advocate of the team’s accomplishments. Further, they identified a successful transition, as the time a new leader is able to apply personal rather than positional power. Four

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<sup>131</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 10.

<sup>132</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Handbook for Leadership Transitions*, 2-3.

participants described the end of the transition period as a moment in time when team members are following the vision, and are embracing change and internalizing leadership's guidance.

The participants also described factors within and outside of the group/section, that influences how long that transition period will last. From the factors within the group/section, six participants listed the leader's adaptability, and the initial level of trust and acceptance that subordinates have in the leader (for example, do they know him already or not). Five of them emphasized the leader's previous assignments—the leader's previous experience in similar positions, and the leader's previous experience in the positions within the group's/section's scope of work, and as equally important, expertise and personal qualities of the group/section members. Four participants pointed to the group's/section's climate and culture, and three stressed the leader's knowledge of the group/section responsibilities and the importance of the group/section organizational structure.

From the factors outside of the group/section, 13 participants listed roles of the superior—support, his understanding and his willingness not to impose additional pressure if not necessary (unrealistic expectations and requirements of the superiors), and four participants emphasized support of or lack thereof by peers outside the group/section. Furthermore, three participants highlighted quality and quantity of the tasks that group/section is realizing during the period of transition, and as equally important, communication between different groups/sections within the department and/or with other organizational units along the same line of expertise. One participant

stressed the flow of the information, as well as the procedures and legal issues, and influence of the leader's family situation and private life.

When asked about the maximum amount of time it should take for a new staff group/section leader to complete the transition, the participants gave different answers. Six of them answered that three months are enough, five of them said that one month is enough, and the rest of the participants (three of them) said that the new leader should have three to six months to complete the transition. One participant answered that exact duration of the transition period cannot be determined due to the variety, intertwining, and complexity of the factors that influence transition.

### Summary

When asked to describe factors that influenced time available for transition, the participants listed all factors from the selected literature. Additionally they listed some new factors, such as team members' initial level of trust in the new leader (they may know him), peers' support outside of the group/section (they may help or they may be a competition), level of cooperation with other groups/sections within the same department or other groups/sections in subordinate or superior commands, along the same line of expertise. The participants also emphasized the leader's family situation and his private life. The majority of the participants said that a new leader should not need more than three months to complete the transition, but almost half of these participants said that one month is enough.

## Leader's Priorities during the Initial Transition

### Selected Literature Reflections

Watkins also offers a road map for the transition period, presented in the form of 10 key transition challenges<sup>133</sup> or essential transition tasks:<sup>134</sup> promote yourself, accelerate your learning, match strategy to situation, secure early wins, negotiate success, achieve alignment, build your team, create coalitions, keep your balance, and expedite everyone. The ultimate goal for a new leader is to manage the transition period beyond a sink-or swim approach.<sup>135</sup> The US Army offers a precise step-by-step model for managing leadership transition. The model consists of six phases: preparation, first day, initial assessment, organizational alignment and team building, establishing routines, and sustaining.

### Survey Data Analysis

When asked about the leader's priorities during the transition period, 14 participants emphasized assessment process, eight pointed out building trust within his group/section, and six participants highlighted mental shift. Through the mental shift, the new leader has to learn how to distinguish the important from the unimportant, and understand how to gain knowledge, apply authority, and exercise self-confidence. According to the participants, through the assessment process, a new leader should first learn about his responsibilities and achieve an expected level of proficiency, as well as

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<sup>133</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 12-14.

<sup>134</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2013).

<sup>135</sup> Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (2003), 237.



learn about group/section scope of work and organization. He also has to assess everyone in his group/section, identify strong points and weaknesses of his team, learn about how the work is usually done (unwritten rules), and then decide what has to change. Equally important, participants indicated assessment of the superiors and peers. Superiors will influence most of the group/section activity through his requirements and expectations, as well as his leadership style. In fact, the importance of assessing the peers mirrors that his peers may help either him or present competition for the next level assignment.

Four participants said that after the assessment is complete, the new leader should develop and present his vision and provide his clear intent about how he intends to execute both current tasks and achieve group/section long-term goals. Five participants pointed out that based on initial assessment, the new leader has to carefully assign tasks to the team members, trying to avoid, at least in the beginning, issues caused by previous methods of task execution. The new leader should try not to jump to premature conclusions and perform more like an observer than actor in staff group performance. One participant indicated that a new leader should also inspire and motivate his subordinates.

Participants were also asked to describe a new staff group/section leader through the five most important characteristics from Kouzes' and Posner's list of 20.<sup>136</sup> The five most frequent characteristics of the new leader are: competent, determined, cooperative, dependable, and honest.

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<sup>136</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Truth About Leadership: the No-fads, Heart-of-the-matter Facts You Need to Know* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2010), 17-18.

## Summary

The participants described leaders' priorities during transition with minor differences as compared to the selected literature. They did not describe some activities such as promote yourself, secure early wins, and create coalition. On the other hand the participants did described the leader's mental shift, they emphasized assessment of the peers, and they did stress the need for slow motion and nonaggressive behavior during the transition—more like an observer then like an actor.

## Conclusion

In chapter 4, the researcher presented study findings in five sections that addressed the issues presented in the secondary research questions: effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF staff section, the most influential factors on the SAF staff group's/section's performance, SAF staff group/section leader's challenges during the transition period, the most influential factors on time available for transition, and leaders' priorities during initial transition. Although different words were used, the participants generally answered all the questions similar to the selected literature with some differences. Chapter 5 provides the conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This research attempted to find what factors influence and determine decisions and actions that the newly commissioned leader of a SAF staff group/section has to perform during the transition period of assuming command. This chapter presents and provides the conclusions of the findings and their implications. In addition, the chapter presents recommendations for further study within the SAF environment regard unanswered questions and the possibility of a different approach to the subject of this study. The recommendations will also refer to possible actions that will help implement the findings of this research.

#### Conclusions

As previously stated, the participants' answers closely matched the selected literature, with some differences and using slightly different terms. This suggests the participants' answers reflected the traits of their national and organizational culture, their experience, and the fact that they are all part of the on-going, cross-functional teams within the military organization. In elaborating the implications of the study findings, the researcher focused on these differences, believing that through them he will best explain causal connections and specifics of the SAF environment. Conclusions for each secondary question are separately addressed with an orientation to the primary question: what factors influence and determine decisions and actions that the newly commissioned

leader of a SAF staff group/section has to perform during the transition period of assuming command?

#### Effectiveness and Efficiency of the SAF Staff Group/Section

The participants described group/section effectiveness and efficiency almost identically to the literature. However, they listed two additional characteristics: procedures as simple as possible with no unnecessary formalities, and diverse expertise and variety of personalities of the team members. Describing the need for simple procedures, without additional complications participants recognized the potential negative impact of administrative and bureaucratic procedures that are the consequences of desire for precision and accuracy, which is one of the characteristics of the culture in Serbia. Participants also recognized the need for a variety of professional and personal profiles because of the education system in Serbia, which still potentiates general education. This could be in contrast with the military organization that insists on a precise division of tasks, and education within the certain military specialty.

In essence, in the SAF an effective and efficient staff group/section is the one with a strong leader who is able to motivate and closely coordinate his subordinates. Furthermore, group sections should have defined purpose, mission, and tasks, should be adequate in size, with experts in various areas who are capable of replacing each other, and who communicate on all aspects of the work of common interest. There is also a need for the evaluation process, and possibility for immediate feedback from the staff group/section members, and constructive criticism in case the work is not well done. Shared understanding about organization goals should allow for establishing priorities for

execution, without unnecessary procedures, and should be followed by adequate resources.

#### The Most Influential Factors on the SAF Staff Group's/ Section's Performance

The participants did not recognize factors such as a reward and accountability system or boring and meaningless assignment to be the most influential on the group's/section's performance. Rather, the participants highlighted the external environment, and additionally listed pressure from superiors in the form of increased workload and unreal expectations. The participants further listed a superior's recognition and appreciation of a group/section work, as well as respect toward a team's recommendations. Finally, participants described the need for the planned and gradual renewal and integration of the new team members over a longer period.

These differences could be explained by the traditional hierarchical order in Serbian society, in which everybody has a place, centralization is popular, and subordinates most of the time expect to be told what to do. At the same time, the Serbian society is a collectivistic society with long-term commitment to, and identification with the group. Group/section members would temporarily disregard internal issues such as accountability or meaningless assignment, and tighten their ranks in order to face external threats such as superiors' pressure, misunderstanding, or no appreciation of the team's work.

Basically, the most influential factors are those related to the group's/section's cohesion, and are reflected in mutual trust, communication, and cooperation between the team members, competences and the expertise of the team members, work organization

inside the group/section, shared goals and tasks, and external pressure and superiors' recognition. Furthermore, planned and gradual renewal and integration of the staff group/section members is very important in order to provide a longer period for the team members to work side-by-side. It is the leader's responsibility to facilitate these activities and processes, but at the same time group/section, members will assess him by his ability to manage external threats to the group cohesion.

#### SAF Staff Group/Section Leader's Challenges during the Transition Period

After describing the meaning of the staff group/section effectiveness and efficiency, participants described challenges that the new leader will face during the transition period. They did not recognize the need for self-promotion, securing early wins, expedite (empower) others, or creating guiding coalitions. Leaders in the SAF could face the feeling of uncertainty among the team members, violated interpersonal relationships, and possible team members' refusal to accept a new leader, as well as superiors' increased expectations, possibility of a team member's inadequate level of expertise, and inadequate manning of the staff group/section.

These differences could again be understood by looking at the leader from the Serbian point of view. In the Serbian culture, a leader is described as a one who is "highly autonomous, makes decisions independently, and is to a certain degree inspiring, team oriented, and attentive to human needs."<sup>137</sup> In a society with a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place,<sup>138</sup> there is not much need to convince the followers to

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<sup>137</sup> Northouse, 395-396.

<sup>138</sup> The Hofstede Centre, "Serbia."

execute order. It is simply the social norm. What the participants described implies the new leader might be more concerned about the things that will challenge the perception of his success than about the things that will help him to succeed.

#### The Most Influential Factors on Time Available for Transition

In addition to factors from the selected literature, participants emphasized team members' initial level of trust and acceptance of the new leader, peers' support outside of the group/section (they may help or they may be a competition), level of cooperation with other groups/sections within the same department or other groups/sections in subordinate or superior commands along the same line of expertise. The participants also emphasized a leader's family situation and his private life. The majority of the participants said that a new leader should not have more than three months to complete the transition, but almost half of these participants said that one month is enough.

More important than time, participants clearly recognized internal and external dynamics that could influence time available for transition. This underscores the importance of belonging to a group (in this case people in the same, specific, and unique line—expertise of work within the military organization) in Serbian society, and the importance of family to the Serbian people. Thus, the differences are understandable. In addition to dynamics described in the literature, leaders in the SAF are significantly influenced by their families' and peers' perception of them, and the way that leader manages that perception may determine the duration of the transition period. Some of the participants said that one month is enough for transition, which again may reflect the influence that the superiors' pressure has on transition, and present the harsh reality.

### Leader's Priorities during Initial Transition

After determining the meanings of effective and efficient teams, influences on a team's performance, a new leader's challenges during transition period, and influences on the time available for transition, the participants described leader's priorities during the transition period. The new staff group/section leader's priorities should be assessment, building trust, presenting his vision and clear intent, and carefully managing team members' capabilities to perform the tasks. However, similar to describing the leader's challenges, the participants again did not describe self-promotion, securing early wins and creating guiding coalition as priorities. Logically, if something is not recognized as a challenge, it will not be addressed as a priority. On the other hand, in addition to the leader's priorities from selected literature, the participants did highlighted the leader's mental shift, they emphasized assessment of the peers and determination of their role, and they stressed the need for slow and balanced actions and nonaggressive behavior during the transition—more like an observer than an actor.

The explanation for the leader's priorities from the selected literature that were not recognized by the participants, is similar to the one regarding the leader's challenge during the transition. Priorities that are additionally emphasized could again be better understood through the cultural lenses. In the Serbian culture, innovation may be resisted, and security is an important element in individual motivation.<sup>139</sup> That means that a leader in the SAF might additionally be concerned about his own wellbeing, which in addition to being common sense, could prevent him from taking shortcuts during the transition period.

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<sup>139</sup> The Hofstede Centre, "Serbia."



However, one question still stands. Are the factors or priorities that were not recognized by the participants less important, or they do not exist in the SAF environment? From the researcher's point of view, the answer to both questions is no. The fact that participants did not recognize some of the factors/priorities from the selected literature does not mean that in the SAF environment these factors/priorities do not exist. It means that the leader in the SAF would not be focused on them, which could be a hidden trap and an insurmountable obstacle to the leader's successful transition.

What Factors Influence and Determine Decisions and Actions that the  
Newly Commissioned Leader of a SAF Staff Group/Section has to  
Perform during the Transition Period of Assuming Command?

The purpose of this research was to help new SAF staff group/section leaders to overcome challenges during the transition into their leadership position. There is no short answer. Data analysis shows that most of the time the participants agree with the selected literature. This may mean that traits of the military culture override some of the traits of the national culture. However, this is not true in all cases; there are some differences.

In the SAF a new leader will first have to recognize a variety of factors that make a SAF staff group/section effective and efficient. Then he should know that in the SAF environment the most influential factors that influence a team's performance are those related to the group/section cohesion. The new leader would most likely be challenged by the feeling of uncertainty and/or violated relationship among the team members, their refusal to accept a new leader, as well as a superior's increased expectations, possibility of team members' inadequate level of expertise, or even inadequate manning of the staff group/section. The new leader should also be aware of the possibility that he might be

more concerned about the things that will challenge the perception of his success, rather than about the things that will help him to succeed.

The time that the new leader will have for transition will be influenced by external and internal dynamics, and additionally by his family's and peers' perception of him. Regardless, he most likely will not have more than three months for transition, and may have even less than that. Finally, during the transition period the new leader should first prepare mentally for the new duty, and concentrate on the assessment process. Then, the new leader should focus on developing trust within his team, presenting his vision and clear intent, and finding the balance between team members' capabilities and assigned tasks. The new leader should also consider the significance of the early wins, empowering others, or guiding coalitions. All of these considerations should allow the leader to make meaningful decisions and should bring out the leader's capability to complete the transition period cautiously, and if possible, without radical changes.

### Recommendations

The study of leadership offers countless research topics. Keeping in mind that leadership as a separate study area is not well presented in the SAF officers' education curriculum and cultural differences make the simple application of available literature unwise, for the SAF research on any specific part of leadership is worthwhile and needed. This research focused on the transition to a new leadership position in the SAF at only the organizational level. Of equal, if not more importance, is the transition to direct and strategic levels of leadership. Furthermore, a logical continuation of this study would be to research what actions need to be conducted by the new leader during the transition period on any given level of leadership.

This research is a qualitative study, and therefore followed a certain pattern. However, technical issues, distance, and available time for research determined the methodology of this research. Future research should allow for a larger sample population and more diverse in structure. This would allow the potential for researchers to get more accurate results, and compare the same process from other perspectives (leaders and followers, men and women, etc.). Further, different methods of data collection may allow for more insightful findings and conclusions, and allow researchers to get more precise insights into the participants' thoughts, and to clarify answers that he could not completely understand.

### Final Conclusions

From the researcher's point of view, this research is just a beginning. It is the researcher's hope that this study will provoke some thoughts and actions. In the SAF, the first action should be to elaborate in detail the concept of leadership and build it into doctrinal documents at the highest level. This would establish the base for implementing the leadership concept in the doctrinal documents at lower levels, and allow the follow up writing of handbooks and/or manuals. Second, there is a need to introduce leadership as a new subject into the military officers' education curriculum on all levels of education. Within the focus area of this research, one possible future action might be to produce a handbook that would recommend practical activities and procedures for the leaders during the transition period in the SAF.

This study did not answer every question that one might have. However, it is the researcher's hope that this study at least provided a point of beginning, and an initial understanding of the transition period in the SAF. From the researcher's point of view,

the final answer lies in [self] education. Leadership is a skill that can be learned.

Recognition that there are more things out there that we need to learn, provides a good start.

## APPENDIX A

### INVITATION

I am currently completing the Army Command and General Staff Officer's Course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as an international student. As an optional part of the program I am completing a Masters in Military Art and Science. To this end I am hoping to seek your assistance.

For my Master thesis, I am researching transition period after assuming leadership position of staff group/section in General staff. Transition to new duty is a very challenging period for every leader and requires careful planning. Various factors, both internal and external may influence and determine transition period. It is a period of leader's vulnerability, but also a period of opportunity, and if successful, leadership transition will facilitate future performance of both leader and his team. Transition to the new command should end when a new leader starts to contribute more value to the new organizations than to consume from it. However, the recommendations for successful transition need to be adjusted to the specific cultural and organizational environment.

The expertise and thoughts of the field grade officers and leaders, such as yourself, are very important to my research. It will allow me to make useful recommendations for future leaders of the Serbian Armed Forces to overcome difficulties as they experience transitions, and to reduce mistakes while building the new team, and assist him or her in setting conditions for a successful command. Therefore, I would be honored if you would participate by reviewing and responding to the following 11 questions. If you are willing to assist and could send your response to me by 10 October 2014, it would be greatly appreciated. If you are willing to assist and need more time, please let me know.

Thank you in advance for sharing your time and expertise. If you have any questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Maj Miljan Svetozarevic

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

29 September 2014

## P O Z I V

za učešće u istraživanju

Trenutno se nalazim na Komandno-generalštabnom koledžu Kopnene vojske u Fort Levenvortu, Kansas, kao internacionalni student. Kao izborni deo programa završavam Master studije u oblasti vojnih nauka. Radi uspešnog završetka potrebna mi je Vaša pomoć.

U okviru moje Master teze proučavam početni period nakon prijema dužnosti načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu. Početni period svake nove dužnosti je veoma izazovan za svakog lidera i zahteva pažljivo planiranje. Različiti faktori, unutrašnji i spoljašnji mogu uticati i oblikovati početni period. To je period kada je lider ranjiv ali je to i period novih mogućnosti i ako se uspešno sprovede omogućiće buduće uspehe kako načelnika tako i grupe/odseka. Početni period bi trebalo da traje do trenutka kada novi načelnik počne više da doprinosi organizaciji nego što od nje uzima. Međutim, sve preporuke za uspešno savlađivanje početnog perioda treba da budu prilagođene konkretnom kulturnom i organizacionom okruženju.

Stručnost, iskustvo i razmišljanja oficira u grupama/odsecima Generalštaba, kao što ste vi, je veoma važno za moje istraživanje. Vaša pomoć će mi omogućiti da sastavim korisne preporuke za oficire-lidere u Vojsci Srbije, kako bi uspešno prebrodili teškoće početnog perioda nakon prijema nove dužnosti, smanjili broj grešaka dok izgrađuju nove timove, te će postaviti osnove za dalje uspešno komandovanje i rukovođenje. S toga bi bio počastvovan ako bi ste učestvovali u mom istraživanju tako što će te pregledati i odgovoriti na priloženih jedanaest pitanja. Bio bih Vam zahvalan ako ste u mogućnosti da pošaljete svoje odgovore do 15. oktobra 2014. godine. Ako vam je potrebno više vremena, molim vas da me obavestite.

Unapred sam zahvalan za Vase odvojeno vreme i ponuđenu stručnost. Ukoliko imate bilo kakva pitanja u vezi mog istraživanja, nemojte oklevati da me kontaktirate.

U Fort Levenvortu, Kansas  
29. septembar 2014. godine

m a j o r  
Miljan Svetozarević

## APPENDIX B

### SURVEY

#### Питања за интервју (Survey questions)

1. Šta bi ste izdvojili kao najvažnije za grupu/odsek u Generalštabu da bi bio efektivan?  
(What is most important for a staff group/section to be effective?)
2. Šta bi ste izdvojili kao najvažnije za grupu/odsek u Generalštabu da bi bio efikasan?  
(What is most important for a staff group/section to be efficient?)
3. Koji unutrašnji faktori najviše utiču na rad grupe/odseka u Generalštabu?  
(What, within the command, most influences the staff group/section's performance?)
4. Koji spoljni faktori najviše utiču na rad grupe/odseka u Generalštabu?  
(What, from outside the command, most influences the staff group/section's performance?)
5. Šta bi bili prioriteti novog načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu u toku početnog perioda nakon prijema dužnosti?  
(When a leader transitions into a new assignment there is a period of transition. What should be the new staff group/section leader's priorities during the leadership transition period?)
6. Šta bi označilo da je početni period nakon prijema dužnosti načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu uspešan?  
(What are the indicators that successful transition has occurred?)
7. Koji unutrašnji faktori najviše utiču na trajanje početnog perioda nakon prijema dužnosti načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu?  
(What, within that command, most influences how long that transition period will last?)
8. Koji spoljni faktori najviše utiču na trajanje početnog perioda nakon prijema dužnosti načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu?

(What, from outside the command, most influences how long that transition period will last?)

9. Koliko je prihvatljivo maksimalno vreme trajanja početnog perioda nakon prijema dužnosti načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu?

(What is the maximum amount of time it should take for a new staff group/section leader to complete the transition?)

10. Koje izazove može novi načelnik grupe/odseka u Generalštabu očekivati u početnom periodu nakon prijema dužnosti?

(What challenges will a new leader on a staff group/section experience during the transition period?)



Select the <b>five (5)</b> most important characteristics of a new staff group/section leader from the following list:		
Honest	Pošten	
Forward-Looking	Dalekovidan	
Inspiring	Inspirativan	
Competent	Kompetentan	
Intelligent	Inteligentan	
Broad-Minded	Širokouman	
Dependable	Pouzdan	
Supportive	Podržavajući	
Fair-Minded	Nepristrasan	
Straightforward	Direktan	
Determined	Odlučan	
Cooperative	Kooperativan	
Ambitious	Ambiciozan	
Courageous	Hrabar	
Caring	Brižan	
Loyal	Lojalan	
Imaginative	Maštovit	
Mature	Zreo	
Independent	Nezavistan	
Self-Controlled	Samokontrolišući	
Other:	Drugo:	

*Source:* James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Truth About Leadership: the No-fads, Heart-of-the-matter Facts You Need to Know* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2010), 17-18.

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**PROJECT TITLE:** **TRANSITION IN COMMAND OF STAFF GROUP/SECTION IN SERBIAN ARMED FORCES**

**APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

**MAJ MILJAN SVETOZAREVIC  
SERBIAN ARMED FORCES**

**CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:**

**miljan.svetozarevic@gmail.com  
phone number: 1 913 215 1651**

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:**

**Dr. Dale F. Spurlin, IRB Chair,  
dale.f.spurlin.civ@mail.mil**

**Dr. Maria L. Clark, Human Protections  
Administrator, maria.l.clark.civ@mail.mil**

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:**

**This research study is being conducted to define what factors determine decisions and actions of the newly commissioned leader of a Serbian Armed Forces General Staff group/section during the transition period of assuming command, from the leadership point of view.**

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:**

**If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be asked to respond to the attached questions. If you are quoted you will be given the opportunity to read what is written as a quote or information provided from you, and you will be allowed to modify the content prior to being submitted as a final MMAS paper.**

**LENGTH OF STUDY:**

**The duration of your involvement with this study will be no more than 10 days**

**RISKS ANTICIPATED:**

**No risks anticipated**

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:**

**No benefits anticipated**

**EXTENT OF  
CONFIDENTIALITY:**

**Personal information obtained during the course of this research study will be kept confidential. All identifying data will be deleted and substituted with the code number, and the original e-mail will be permanently deleted. When results of this study are incorporated into an academic report the identification of those taking part is withheld.**

**TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to**

**participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.**

**Any e-mail response and the date of the e-mail response provided to attached questions will be considered as an implied consent unless you state otherwise.**

## SAGLASNOST ZA UČEŠĆE U PROJEKTU

NASLOV  
PROJEKTA:

POČETNI PERIOD NAKON PRIJEMA DUŽNOSTI NAČELNIKA  
GRUPE/ODSEKA U VOJSCI SRBIJE

DATUM ODOBRAVANJA PROJEKTA: \_\_\_\_\_

DATUM ZAVRŠRTKA PROJEKTA:

OSNOVNI ISTRAŽIVAČ:

MAJ MILJAN SVETOZAREVIC  
Vojska Srbije

KONTAKT PODACI ZA PROBLEME/PITANJA:

miljan.svetozarevic@gmail.com  
phone number: 1 913 215 1651

IRB CHAIR KONTAKT/TELEFON  
INFORMACIJE:

Dr. Dale F. Spurlin, IRB Chair,  
dale.f.spurlin.civ@mail.mil

Dr. Maria L. Clark, Human Protections  
Administrator, maria.l.clark.civ@mail.mil

SVRHA ISTRAŽIVANJA:

Ovo istraživanje se sprovodi kako bi se utvrdilo koji faktori određuju odluke i postupke novopostavljenog načelnika grupe/odseka u Generalštabu Vojske Srbije, u toku početnog preioda nakon prijema dužnosti, sa stanovišta liderstva.

KORIŠĆENE PROCEDURE ILI METODE:

Ako se složite da učestvujete u ovom istraživanju bićete zamoljeni da odgovorite na priložena pitanja. Ako budete citirani pružiće Vam se prilika da pročitate šta je napisano kao citat ili kao informacija koju ste Vi pružili i biće Vam omogućeno da izmenite sadržaj pre konačne predaje MMAS teze.

TRAJANJE STUDIJE:

Vaše angažovanje za potrebe ove studije neće trajati duže od 20 dana

PREDVIĐENI RIZICI:

Nisu predviđeni rizici

PREDVIĐENE KORISTI:

Nisu predviđene koristi

STEPEN  
POVERLJIVOSTI:

Sve lične informacije koje se dobiju u toku istraživanja će biti smatrane poverljivim. Svi podaci koji se mogu iskoristiti za Vašu identifikaciju će biti izbrisani i zamenjeni kodnim brojem, nakon čega će originalni e-mail biti trajno izbrisan. Kada se rezultati istraživanja ugrade u tezu, identifikacija učesnika neće biti omogućena.

**USLOVI UČEŠĆA:** Razumem da je ovo istraživački projekat i da je moje učešće dobrovoljno. Takođe razumem da ako odlučim da učestvujem u ovom projektu, mogu da povučem svoj pristanak u bilo kom trenutku i prekinem učešće bez objašnjenja, kazne, gubitka beneficija ili akademskih položaja na koje bih inače mogao polagati pravo.

**Bilo kakav odgovor na priložena pitanja koji je poslat elektronskom poštom, kao i datum odgovora poslatog elektronskom poštom biće smatrani saglasnošću za učešćem u projektu, ukoliko ne izjavite suprotno.**

## APPENDIX D

### APPROVAL LETTER



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY COMBINED ARMS CENTER  
LEADER DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION  
100 STIMSON AVENUE  
FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66027-2301

ATZL-SWA-QA

30 September 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: Major Miljan Svetozarevic, Command and General Staff  
College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027

SUBJECT: Institutional Review Board Approval

1. Your protocol to research assumption of command activities of Serbian commanders, dated 29 September 2014 was reviewed and approved by expedited review on 30 September 2014.
2. You have been assigned protocol approval number 14-09-099. You should reference this number when submitting any additional documentation or requesting information from our office concerning this protocol. Your research study will be reported at the next meeting of the Institutional Review Board. You may begin work upon receipt of this letter.
3. In order to maintain approval for this study, you are required to submit a continuing review report at least four (4) weeks prior to the expiration of this approval. **Your approval for this study will expire on 29 September 2015.**
4. Any modifications to this study (including, but not limited to changes in recruitment materials or procedures, investigators, inclusion/exclusion criteria, increases in the number of participants enrolled, interview/survey questions, or data collection procedures) must be submitted as a written amendment for review and approval prior to implementing the change.
5. Confirm informed consent for each interview participant prior to conducting interviews. Since the informed consent form is the only document that will link the participants to the study, the requirement for you to maintain informed consent forms is waived.
6. Securely maintain all research documents and data collected for three (3) years. Your protocol indicated interview information will be de-identified with codes replacing participant names and that you will destroy documents such as emails with personally identifiable information.
7. You will be expected to comply with these conditions and follow your approved protocol. Failure to follow these guidelines could result in the termination of the approval for your research.
8. Submit a study closure report to Research Services upon completion of the study. If you have any questions, please contact the Human Protections Administrator at [maria.l.clark.civ@mail.mil](mailto:maria.l.clark.civ@mail.mil) or the undersigned at [dale.f.spurlin.civ@mail.mil](mailto:dale.f.spurlin.civ@mail.mil).

Dr. Dale F. Spurlin

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